

Message Text

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ORIGIN EB-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /009 R

66011

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APPROVED BY EB/TRA/MA:CTAYLOR, JR.

-----037280 130623Z /13

R 130007Z JUN 78

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO DEFENSE MAPPING AGENCY HYDROGRAPHIC CENTER (DMAHC)

NAVAL OCEANIC SURVEILLANCE INTELLIGENCE CENTER (NOSIC)

MARITIME ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

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FOLLOWING REPEAT BANGKOK 16445 ACTION SECSTATE INFO MANILA,
HONG KONG, DIA WASHDC, CINCPAC HONOLULU, AND SINGAPORE
JUN 08.

QUOTE: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BANGKOK 16445

MANILA FOR USCG

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: CGEN, EWWT, TH

SUBJ: APPARENT ATTEMPTED BOARDING OF US VESSELL

1. CAPT OF SEALNAD CONTAINER VESSELL SS PONCE INFORMED CONSUL
JUNE 6 OF FOLLOWING NOTATION BY CHIEF MATE IN SHIP'S LOG
FOLLOWING CONSUL'S QUERY ABOUT REPORT THAT THE VESSELL WAS
BOARDED BY RIVER PIRATES IN THE CHAO PHYA RIVER 10 KMS BELOW
BANGKOK. BEGIN QTE: ABSTRACT OF DECK LOG ENTRY SS PONCE 5
JUNE 78: 1908 WHILE ABEAM OF UNITED FLOUR DOCK DK/MAINT. H.A.
PRUSS CAST OFF A LINE FROM THE STERN, BELONGING TO A RIVER
PIRATE ATTEMPTING TO BOARD. THE RIVER PIRATES RESPONDED
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WITH SMALL ARMS FIRE. THE PILOT CALLED FOR POLICE ASSISTANCE.
END QTE

2. CAPT JAMES R SHAW INDICATED THAT HE DID NOT HEAR OR
OBSERVE FIRING OR THE ATTEMPTED BOARDING. HOWEVER, SEQUENCE
OF EVENTS WENT IN THE FOLLOWNG MANNER: THE SHIP ENTERED THE
CHAO PHYA RIVER AT DUSK, PICKED UP A CUSTOMS OFFICER AND THE

PILOT AND PROCEEDED TO MAKE THE 30 KILOMETER ASCENT OF THE RIVER TO KONG THOY PORT AREA OF BANGKOK. THE SHIP CARRIED TWO CONTAINERS LOADED WITH 81MM MORTARS, M16 RIFLES, GRENADE LAUNCHERS AND RAPID FIRE WEAPONS FOR NAVAL LAUNCHES CONSIGNED TO JUSMAG. CAPT'S VERSION OF WHAT HAPPENED WAS THAT VESSEL WHILE SOME 10KMS SOUTH OF KLONG THOY JUST AT DUSK IN THE VICINITY OF THE UNITED FLOUR WHARVES, WAS CHASED BY AN OPEN MOTOR LAUNCH CONTAINING 5 APPARENTLY UNARMED MEN WHICH APPROACHING FROM THE STERN MANAGED TO THROW A LING ABOARD WITH A GRAPPLE HOOKING ONTO THE STERN RAIL. HOWEVER, THE STERN WATCH DISENGAGED THE GRAPPLE AND THE BOAT WITHDREW AFTER THE MAN ON WATCH ALSO DROPPED A PIECE OF METAL DEBRIS LYING ON THE DECK INTO THE BOAT FROM THE FANTAIL. THE MAN ON WATCH SAID THERE HAD BEEN SEVERAL OTHER BOATS IN THE VICINITY APPARENTLY IN THE COMPANY OF BOAT WHICH WITHDREW WITH THE THWARTED ASSAILANT. THE PILOT AND CUSTOMS OFFICER OBSERVED NONE OF THE ACTION.

3. CAPT BELIEVES THAT IT MAY HAVE BEEN RIVER PIRATES AIDED AND ABETTED BY CUSTOMS OFFICIALS WHO WERE AWARE OF THE PRESENCE ON BOARD OF WEAPONS. ANOTHER POSSIBLE EXPLANATION IS THAT A SMALL CRAFT SIMPLY WAS HOOKING A RIDE UP TO BANGKOK.

4. THIS LATTER POSSIBILITY IS DISCOUNTED BY THE LOCAL SEALAND REP WHO SAID THAT THERE WAS AT LEAST ONE SIMILAR INCIDENT A YEAR AGO WHEN BOARDERS, IN THE SAME AREA OF THE RIVER, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SUCCESSFULLY MADE IT ABOARD AND OPENED CONTAINERS AND WERE CAUGHT THROWING 10 CARTONS OF BICYCLES AND HAIR DRYERS OVER BOARD TO TRAILING LONG TAILED BOATS. THE BOARDERS JUMPED OVER BOARD AND WERE NOT APPREHENDED. THE SEALAND AGENT NOTED THAT A NUMBER OF AGENCIES WERE AWARE OF THE DELIVERY OF THE WEAPONS IN ADVANCE, INCLUDING THE PORT AUTHORITY, CUSTOMS, SEALAND AND JUSMAG.

5. SEALAND NOW HAS A STANDARD REQUIREMENT FOR MAINTAINING A WATCH AROUND THEIR SHIPS PARTICULARLY DURING THE HOURS OF DARKNESS WHILE MOVING UP THE RIVER. WHILE IN PORT, LIGHTS AND SECURITY GUARDS ARE MAINTAINED TO PROTECT THE CONTAINERS. FOLLOWING THIS INCIDENT SEALAND THAILAND HAS RECOMMENDED TO THE COMPANY THAT IN THE FUTURE ALL ARMS SHIPMENTS BE KEPT UNDER DECK.

6. PONCE DEPARTED BANGKOK FOR HONG KONG JUNE 6.

7. COMMENT: THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THIS INCIDENT ARE ADMITTEDLY UNCLEAR. THERE IS NO CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE THAT THE SHIP WAS ACTUALLY IN THE PROCESS OF BEING BOARDED OR THE WEAPONS ON BOARD WERE THE TARGET. EMBASSY OFFS DID NOT HAVE

THE OPPORTUNITY TO QUESTION SEAMAN PRUSS WHO IS THE ONLY
AVAILABLE WITNESS. HONG KONG MAY WISH TO DO SO WHEN THE PONCE
ARRIVES. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE DEPT MAY ALSO WISH PUB-
LISH A NOTICE TO MARINERES. END COMMENT. WHITEHOUSE
UNQUOTE VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SHIP HARASSMENT, PONCE SS, RIVERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE149297
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: CTAYLOR, JR.:EW
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780246-0416
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780665/aaaacdox.tel
Line Count: 121
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: f04c498a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN EB
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2371661
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: APPARENT ATTEMPTED BOARDING OF US VESSELL
TAGS: CGEN, EWWT, PORS, TH, US, SEALAND
To: DEFENSE MAPPING AGENCY HYDROGRAPHIC NAVAL OCEANIC SURVEILLANCE INTELLIG MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/f04c498a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014